DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 334 185 SP 033 176

AUTHOR Farber, Barry A.
TITLE Tracing a Phenomenon: Teacher Burnout and the Teacher Critics of the 1960s.
PUB DATE Apr 91
NOTE 24p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Chicago, IL, April 3-7, 1991).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Book Reviews; Criticism; Economically Disadvantaged; Educational Change; Educationally Disadvantaged; Elementary Secondary Education; *Libel and Slander; Minority Group Children; *Public School Teachers; Socioeconomic Influences; Student Alienation; *Teacher Burnout; *Teacher Characteristics; *Urban Education; *Value Judgment
IDENTIFIERS Boston Public Schools MA; Herndon (James); Holt (John); Kohl (Herbert); Kozol (Jonathan); *1960s; 1970s; Silberman (Charles E)

ABSTRACT

Teacher burnout, defined as feelings of uselessness and inconsequentiality, did not begin in the 1960s, but it was aggravated by increasing lack of respect and appreciation from the general public. The great social unrest of the 1960s and 1970s focused on the related issues of economic and educational inequity, and much public pressure was brought to bear on teachers to remedy the longstanding social and educational problems of disadvantaged minority group children. A series of books stirred up images of teachers as racist, authoritarian, and anti-progressive. John Holt's message was that schools corrupted the integrity and intelligence of children, particularly minority children, and he blamed teachers for children's behavior. Jonathan Kozol targeted individual teachers and racism in schools; like Holt, he fell into the trap of imagining that schools are the only influence on children's behavior. Herbert Kohl's book saw teacher incompetency as primarily responsible for students' misbehavior. James Herndon believed that schools are too obsessed with order, and Charles Silberman, more sympathetic to teachers, directed his anger towards the entrenched and mindless policies of schools and school boards. The books by these men constituted a source of stress for teachers and contributed to teacher burnout. (LL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED334185

Tracing a Phenomenon: Teacher Burnout and the Teacher Critics of the 1960s

Barry A. Farber, Ph.D.
Dept. of Clinical Psychology
Teachers College
Columbia University
New York, NY 10027

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, Illinois, April 1991.

Based on material to be published in: Crisis in Education: Stress and Burnout in the American Teacher, San Franciso: Jossey-Bass, 1991.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

B Farber

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

SP033176

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Tracing a Phenomenon: Teacher Burnout and the Teacher Critics of the 1960s

Teachers stress and burnout did not begin in the 1960s. They are hardly new phenomena, even if they are now known by different names. As Sarason (1982) has observed: "The phenomena that are so troublesome about schools today were not created yesterday, or last year, or a decade ago, but rather are the latest eruptions and disruptions that have long characterized schools in our social history" (p. 209). Teachers in this country have rarely been treated with the respect accorded other professionals.

Still, the sixties were critical times for teachers. The great social unrest of the 60s focused on the related issues of economic and educational inequity, and much public pressure was brought to bear on teachers to remedy the longstanding social and educational problems of disadvantaged minority group children.

The task of providing quality education to all, especially if this task is defined in terms of insuring equal educational outcomes, was enormous and destined to take decades; we continue to confront these same challenges today. Nevertheless, the initial intensity and enthusiasm with which most of the country approached the task of overcoming past injustices blinded us to the realities of the change process. Change--whether it be social or educational--takes time, involves multiple constituencies, and rarely proceeds in a linear, orderly fashion (see Sarason, 1982, for a thorough discussion of this issue). Teachers did not and could not dramatically change reading or SAT scores or high school dropout rates overnight. But the public was impatient, either out of a

sense of moral obligation or fear of civil unrest (or both), and scholarly explanations regarding the nature and limitations of institutional change were rarely part of public discussions on the need for vast changes in our educational system. The bottom line, though, was that virtually everyone and everything connected to schools--teachers, administrators, unions, and school buildings--began to be increasingly scrutinized and criticized by the media and ever larger segments of the public. Teacher strikes further fueled public resentment and animosity and the relationship between teachers and the public came to be increasingly characterized by an unfortunate mixture of mutual insensitivity, misunderstanding, and overreaction.

To this mixture, though, one additional inflammatory element must be added--a string of anti-teacher books in the 60s and 70s that contributed strongly to public images of teachers as racist, authoritarian, and anti-progressive. Whatever difficulties teachers and their various constituencies had in understanding each others' needs during these troubled, sensitive times were exacerbated greatly by the publication of several angry, best-selling books, most of them, ironically enough, written by teachers themselves.

John Holt

Of all the teacher-authors who have excoriated the American public school system, John Holt has been the most well renowned and persistent critic. On his behalf, one could say that the gist of his message was that, as a nation, we need to take better care of children, particularly poor minority children. He seemed totally and passionately devoted to children's needs. On the other hand, through all his books, he maligned schools and teachers in ways that consistenty ignored the complex nature

of educational and social systems. As Postman (1979) observed, critics like Holt "had a well-developed contempt for teachers and administrators" (p. 14).

Holt's books espoused romantic notions regarding the innocence of children and the evils of the adult (teacher) world that resonated strongly with the anti-establishment values of the time. His notion that "the chief and indeed only exploiters of children these days are the schools" (1969, p. 29, emphasis in original) was characteristic of a simplistic view of childhood, education, and society. He essentially ignored the fact that classrooms, particularly those in urban settings, can be difficult and frustrating places. Holt's theory of educational failure in urban schools was one in which schools, and school alone, essentially corrupted the integrity and intelligence of previously intact children. Holt's perspective allowed no learning-disabled, lead-poisoned, hyperactive or slow-learning children. Little or no mention is made in his books of the deleterious effects of single-parent families, of unsupervised after-school time, of the lack of positive role models, of emotional or physical abuse, of the lack of quiet places for children to study; there is no acknowledgement that low self-esteem, or lack of faith in education might impact upon behavior, motivation, or learning style in the classroom. When Holt unconditionally blamed the school for "strategies of failure" he ignored the harshness of everyday life endured by many inner-city children; by doing so he also ignored the difficulty of the task assumed by teachers in inner-city schools.

Holt began How Children Fail (1964) by stating that almost all children "fail to develop more than a tiny part of the tremendous capacity for learning, understanding, and creating with which they were born and of

which they made full use during the first two or three years of their lives" (p. 15, emphasis added). But many children, of course, do not make full use of their innate capacities even during their first two or three years, not to mention their first five or six. Again, environmental conditions ranging from nutritional insult to emotional neglect, from decaying housing to lack of appropriate and sufficient stimuli may cause some children to begin school with grossly underdeveloped skills. And as could be expected, the immature child (in terms of emotional or cognitive development) will have difficulty socially and educationally. These children, who are often overrepresented in inner-city classrooms, are difficult to teach and the effort to educate them may add substantially to the ordinary stresses of teaching. It was callous of Holt to pretend that such issues are not part of the educational matrix encountered by teachers.

Our educational system is, of course, far from flawless, and teachers, as human beings, are necessarily imperfect. But Holt's suggestion that educational policies are deliberately nefarious exercises in futility and ignorance was needlessly overstated. To Holt, all "students are invariably curious, patient, determined, energetic, skillful learner(s) (1969, p. 17). But, as teachers, parents, and most human service professionals well know, though, many children do not enter school with these exemplary qualities, either in the inner-city or the most affluent sections of suburbia. Many do not exhibit qualities of patience or determination at age 5, 10, or 15. The point is that teachers have taxing jobs--few who haven't tried it can imagine how just how stressful it often is to be in a roomful of children with disparate abilities and attention spans, trying one's best to sustain their attention and interest in learning. To claim otherwise, to imply that children are an easy audience, filled only with glorious,

wonderful qualities, is essentially to misrepresent both parties in any learning situation.

Perhaps the most controversial issue in urban schools is that of discipline and the "disruptive" child. In this regard, my sense is that nothing so inflamed those teachers who read Holt's books as much as his "apologist" stance in regard to disruptive behavior. Most teachers are responsible at any one time for 20-30 children, but one acting out child is capable of sabatoging the learning efforts of all the others. It is true that an incompetent or inexperienced teacher may react poorly or inappropriately to disruptive behavior, further inflaming the problem; in addition, the probability of disruptive behavior arising is certainly greater in those classrooms where the teacher is incompetent or uncaring. However, these children are not the product of anyone's imagination nor the result of "inferior" teaching. Holt, though, refused to acknowledge problem children, preferring to see only problem teachers.

"When children," wrote Holt, "feel a little relieved of the yoke of anxiety that they are used to bearing, they behave like other people freed from yokes, like prisoners released. . .they cut up; they get bold and sassy; they may for a while try to give a hard time to those adults who for so long have been giving them a hard time" (1964, p. 97). Behind these glib words, though, are real children: for example, the child from a poor, overburdened, single-parent home who is angry and defiant, and who, by his actions interferes with or even physically intimidates those who do try to learn; or the child who when asked to do something lets loose with a torrent of invective that even if ignored by the teacher cannot help but provoke other children. Holt simplified the complex and all too-typical problems of inner-city teachers into a very neat but misleading formula: teachers and

schools are bad, therefore students are justified in acting badly. Foremost among those who criticized the educational establishment during the late 60s and 70s, Holt popularized this particular form of "blaming the teacher" for the behavior of children.

Teachers were criticized for many things in Holt's books. In How Children Fail, Holt (1964) asserted that children are "afraid above all else, of failing. . .[adults] whose limitless hopes and expectations for them hang over their heads like a cloud" (p. 16). But then immediately following this, Holt stated that children are "bored because the things they are given and told to do in school make such limited and narrow demands on the wide spectrum of their intelligence, capabilities and talents" (p. 16). In successive paragraphs Holt criticized teachers for both expecting too much and then too little. Teachers, according to Holt, simply can't teach, and they are too insensitive or dense to gear their work to the appropriate level of the child.

Holt accused teachers not just of incompetence or mediocrity, but of purposeful cruelty. And it was not just a handful of "exceptions" that were indicted, but rather the whole profession. He stated: "The touch came first, and if, like most teachers, I had withdrawn or even flinched from this touch, that would probably have ended the possibility of further contact" (1969, p. 27). It is one thing, of course, to criticize the shortcomings of the school system or even the educational philosophy of teachers, but to accuse "most teachers" of being so insensitive as to flinch from a child's touch is especially unfair. Such a slur impugns the basic humanity of teachers and was the kind of disparaging, overly generalized assessment of the field that made many teachers feel defensive about their work. It might be argued that this was but a single sentence in a

single book but the tone of this particular remark, along with others like it in Holt's books, reflected a new way of thinking about teachers--as professionals who tended toward malevolence, selfishness, and overt racism.

As a body of work, his books, in conjunction with those whose work shall be addressed shortly, attacked schools and teachers in ways that left many in the profession feeling extraordinarily embittered. Were teachers to believe Holt's writings they would have to conclude that that they were entirely without virtues, that their efforts were worthless and bankrupt, that no one graduated high school feeling that they had been well educated or treated decently by teachers, that public schools were responsible for no learning at all, that no creative writing or thinking ever occurred within this nation's schools, that their educational practices were indefensible and the quality of their caring was without any saving graces whatsoever.

Jonathan Kozol

Death at an Early Age, subtitled "The Destruction of the Hearts and minds of Negro Children in the Boston Public Schools," was published in 1967 and subsequently won the National Book Award. It is a stinging, convincing indictment of the racism within the Boston Public School system in the early 60s. Its readers learn of "the injustices and depredations of the Boston school sytem which compelled its Negro pupils to regard themselves with something less than the dignity and respect of human beings" (p. 8). Readers learn painfully of kindnesses forbidden to the black students, of class and racial condescension, of "liberal dishonesty," of the cruelty of teachers who would tear up a child's pictures while designating them as "garbage." Implicit in its depiction of the dismal conditions endured by Black children in these schools is a

passionate plea for a more humane educational system, one in which the values and needs of minority children are understood and respected.

Kozol was far less sensationalistic than Holt and far less blatantly anti-teacher. For the most part, his targets were individual teachers with whom he worked, not the entire profession. For example, his sense of the two teachers with whom he worked most closely is that he learned nothing at all from them "except how to suppress and pulverize any sparks of humanity or independence or originality in children" (p. 14). He describes one of these teachers as follows;

> If Stephen began to fiddle around during a lesson, the Art Teacher generally would not notice him at first. When she did, both he and I the children around him would prepare for trouble. For she would go at his desk with something truly like a vengeance and would shriek at him a way that carried terror. Give me that: Your paints are all muddy! You've made it a mess. Look at what he's done!...Garbage! Junk!... I do not know very much about painting, but I know enought to know that the Art Teacher did not know much about it either and that, furthermore, she did not know or care anything at all about the way in which you can destroy a human being. (p. 2-4).

The difference in tone between "Death at an Early Age" and "How Children Fail" is notable and significant. Kozol's anger is directed at those whom he saw abusing children; if there are no passages describing good work performed by other teachers at least there are no passages suggesting that all teachers are purposively cruel. Kozol's message, then, is far easier to accept--and far fairer. Some teachers were, and some undoubtedly still are, racist, caught up in the currents of an inexcusable

part of American history. Kozol's rage was at racism and the ways it manifested itself in schools. But despite the painful truth of many of Kozol's assertions, he too, like Holt, fell into the trap of imagining that schools are the only influence on children's behavior. According to this view, all inappropriate behavior manifest in schools is necessarily and exclusively the school's fault. On commenting on the plight of a 16 or 17 year old youth, Kozol suggests the following:

> There was nothing wrong with his motivation, and there was nothing wrong in his home or home-life either. It was the public schools pure and simple, which had held him back and and made the situation of his life pathetic. It is the same story for thousands of other children all over Boston, and I believe it is the same for children in dozens of other cities in the United States too (p. 48).

Note the similarity to Holt's notion that "the chief and indeed only exploiters of children these days are the schools". But Kozol doesn't know, or at least doesn't inform us, whether there really might be something in this child's background to have made schooling more difficult. Might this child have been held back by inferior schooling? Yes, of course, this is a possibility. He might have had a series of incompetent, noncaring, racist teachers. But the assumption that this is necessarily true and that nothing in this child's background, or the background of "thousands of others" like him in the U.S., has anything to do with the success or failure of learning to read or learning mathematic skills is both facile and misleading. Similarly, Kozol implies that children's lack of self-esteem arises solely as a consequence of their "incorporating the school's structural inadequacies into their own consciousness and attributing to themselves the flaws which the building or the system contained" (p. 92). The

likelihood of such a process occuring is not the issue; rather, it is the assumption that this process accounts wholly for the deficits in self-esteem often seen in children raised in difficult, poverty-stricken surroundings.

Kozol fell into another trap as well. Like many others writing about minority issues at the time, he tended to romanticize the poor. In a later work, The Night is Dark and I am far from Home (1975), Kozol professes opposition to the notion of "romantic child-adulation" (p. 2), going as far as suggesting that the belief that "kids are neat" and that we should let them "grow and blossom, and explore, according to their own organic and spontaneous needs. . . strains all credibility" (p. 2). Nevertheless, in Death at an Early Age, his theme throughout was children's "quiet heroism" and all schoolchildren encountered in this book seemed to fit that description. A child's insolence toward a principal is described in terms of his ability to "suddenly and miraculously burst free" (p. 92). Noise and anger are dealt with by "loyalty only to them for their nerve and for their defiance" (p. 162). A dangerous and potentially fatal prank (sounding false alarms) is easily justified. As a rule, Kozol saw children as innocent and benign, transformed only when they entered a school building.

"It's all the fault of the schools and/or teachers" is a dangerous fallacy. Its simplicity of course is appealing inasmuch as it attributes complex, longstanding problems to a single source while disregarding the impact of other variables. And while this theory ("It's all the schools fault") gratified a good many people and allowed them to vent their rage against a system that was clearly not working well, it also alienated just that constituency (teachers) who were especially needed to implement changes. The difference between "teachers have a part in this" and "it's

all the fault of teachers (or schools)" is not an insignificant one. Had a more complex equation been used by Holt or Kozol (or Kohl or others)--one that allowed for other variables in the analysis of school performance and one that recognized that many constitutencies had failed in their mission to equalize the opportunities offered to minority children--more teachers may well have been able to accept partial culpability for educational failure and been able to invest themselves more fully in change. It should surprise no one that most teachers were not about to accept exclusive responsibility for the problems of minority education--and many were enraged at the suggestion they should. And for some, the process of burnout was set in motion by the general failure of the American public and its popular authors to distribute equitably credit and blame for the general state of public education.

Herbert Kohl

The third member of the influential triad of teacher-authors writing in the 60s about their experiences in public schools was Herbert Kohl. His book, 36 Children, was published in 1967 to the same sort of acclaim that Holt and Kozol's books received. In fact, this book bears a striking resemblance to Death at an Early Age. Both books are essentially diaries of novice, middle-class, white teachers working in inner-city elementary schools; both are poignant and touching in their descriptions of children who seem to blossom educationally and emotionally when finally treated sensitively and respectfully by caring teachers; and both books are powerful and inflammatory, making most readers feel incensed at the ways in which poor, minority children are dealt with by the system. In comparison to Kozol's work, Kohl's book is focused more extensively on the lives of the individual children in his class, but he too recounts the tragic

impact on the lives of ghetto children of dilapidated schools, untended classes, antiquated and irrelevant texts, missing supplies, and of course, most centrally, uncaring and insensitive teachers.

For all its virtues, though, Kohl's book suffers from some familiar tendencies. For one, teachers and their "preconceived notions" of children are seen as primarily responsible for whatever individual differences there are among children: "It is amazing how 'emotional' problems can disappear, how the dullest child can be transformed into the keenest and the brightest into the most ordinary when the prefabricated judgments of other teachers are forgotten" (p. 13). Kohl, like many other social critics of this era, assumed that inner city classrooms operated on the principle of self-fulfilling prophecy, the so-called Pygmalion Effect (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968), wherein children come to to live up to (or down to) the expectations of their teachers. To Kohl, it was no wonder that most inner city children didn't do well in school given the prejudices, insensitivity, and low expectations of their teachers. Moreover, teachers weren't just insensitive, they also tended to be "dull and uninspiring" (p. 54). According to Kohl, "the teacher doesn't understand much of what he is teaching, and worse, doesn't care that he doesn't understand" (p. 54).

Predictably, then, Kohl attributed student misbehavior to teacher incompetencies: "discipline problems developed as the pressure of uninteresting and alien work began to mount over the weeks...Alvin's malaise or John's refusal to work were natural responses to an unpleasant environment; not merely in my class but a cumulative school environment which meant nothing more to most of the children than white-adult ignorance and authority" (p. 28-29). Conversely, the solution to virtually all problems--from behavioral to academic--was, according to Kohl,

teacher creativity and sensitivity: "She was considered a 'troublemaker' by some teachers, 'disturbed' by others. Yet when offered something substantial, a serious novel, for example, or the opportunity to write honestly, she blossomed" (p. 185).

The same objections, then, may be raised in regard to this book as were raised in response to the works of Holt and Kozol. If we were to take the sentiments of these books at face value we would be left to believe that in the mid 60s there were no children with problems outside of the school environment and that there were but three virtuous and dedicated white teachers, all men, in all of the nation's public schools. Unfortunately, taken together, these books may well have had just such an effect on the public, establishing, or at least reinforcing the perception that schools were malevolent places, run by authoritarian and gloomy caretakers who cared little about children in general and even less about black or hispanic children. It is important, though, to make the following distinction: I am not suggesting that these authors were inaccurate in the descriptions of the horrors they saw--in fact, it may be argued that they performed an invaluable service in raising the consciousness of this country to the plight of minority children; my objection rather is to their singular attribution of blame (the schools/the teachers) for a remarkably complex set of problems, to their consistent overgeneralization in regard to the characteristics, intentions, and morals of teachers, and lastly, to the sanctimony of tone in these books, a tone that implied that only one way of teaching was right and that there could be no disagreements among reasonable people as to the cause of or solutions to the problems that were being described.

Herndon and Silberman

Two other books of this era should be mentioned as well. One is James Herndon's book, The Way it Spozed to be (1965), an account of teaching in an impoverished Junior High School similar in style to those of Kohl and Kozol, and the second is Charles Silberman's work, Crisis in the Classroom (1970), a more scholarly look at the state of American education as of the late 1960s.

In comparison to the other books referred to previously, Herndon's book was mild in tone. The school in which he taught was in California, and the feelings evoked in the book are in many ways consistent with stereotyped notions of that state. Herndon's anger at schools and teachers in these pages seems more of the "tcch-tcch" variety than the outraged/incensed/this is unforgivable variety favored by the other authors discussed. What also makes Herdon's book somewhat distinctive among those of this genre is his willingness to acknowledge that outrageous behavior could be exhibited by students as well as teachers. He was certainly critical of the racism of some of the teachers in his school and condemned the intransigence of virtually everyone connected with the schools--the ways in which everyone, including students, clung to some mythical notion of the way schools were "spozed to be"--but he also realized that teaching in an inner city school could be "exhausting" and that students could behave in difficult, unreasonable and even racist ways. Hernon had an intuitive understanding of burnout as well, hoping that he could hold out long enough for "something" to happen in his class and fearing that his teaching would make no difference in his students' later lives (p. 142).

Herndon's main point was that teachers and schools are too obsessed with order. "Why do you let them fuss so?" asked a student in Herndon's

9th grade class. "I said I thought if they could ever get it all out of their systems, they might stop. Otherwise, I said, they'd never really stop it; they'd just be waiting until I let go a second and they'd be at it again" (p. 151). According to Herndon, we try too hard to limit children's freedom. Teachers and administrators should, he believed, be more tolerant of chaos and apparent unruliness: "We legislate agaist running, yelling, eating, tardiness, cosmetics, transistors, classroom parties and free elections. We invent penalites for transgressors; then we must invent another set of penalties for those who won't abide by the first" (p. 187). So what if there's noise, Herndon argued. Eventually the classroom will calm down and learning will occur. The attempt for adults to create order simply exacerbates the situation and sets up an adversarial struggle that rarely abates. Herndon believed that schools were basically places where children were "bottled up for seven hours a day", and where their real desires were "not only ignored but actively penalized." "Maybe you can do it," said Herndon, referring to the ability of students to stay in school and endure the mindlessness and rigidity of the classrooom, "and maybe you can't, but either way, it's probably done you some harm" (p. 188).

Herndon's solution to educational failure was "liberty", an answer that calls to mind Hooks' (1966) and Sarason's (1982) notion of the "well-intentioned but untestable abstraction." These are usually virtuous "should be" statements with no operational criteria designated, no clear way of testing whether and how an ideal is being met. In fact, one of Sarason's examples of an untestable hypothesis bears a remarkable resemblance to Herndon's call for liberty: "School systems in general, and classrooms in particular, are authoritarian settings. The democratic spirit must become more pervasive." It is hard to argue with the goal of

"liberty"--one wonders though whether Herndon ever considered that liberty might mean different things to different students and that for some, it might even mean the freedom to learn in a safe and orderly environment.

In comparison to the works of Holt, Kohl, Kozol, and Herndon, Silberman's book reflects an entirely different strand of educational criticism. Funded by the Carnegie Corporation, Silberman spent 3 1/2 years researching and writing a book about "what is wrong and what needs to be done" (p. vii) in remaking American education, in the process collaborating with many of the most eminent educators and educational scholars in the world.

Silberman was of two minds about teachers. On the one hand, he was openly sympathetic toward teachers. In his foreword, Silberman stated the following: "What I hope distinguishes my indictment of the public schools from that of other critics is an empathy for the far greater number of teachers who work hard and long at one of the most difficult and exacting of jobs, but who are defeated by institutions which victimize them no less than their students" (p. x). Most teachers, claimed Silberman, were "decent, honest, well-intentioned people who do their best under the most trying circumstances" (p. 142). He agreed with Sarason's observation that teaching was a lonely job and that teachers were rarely treated in a professional manner. He noted that teachers rarely have offices of their own, that their lounges are often no more than shabbily furnished rooms, that they are typically held in low regard by the rest of the community, that media stereotypes of the profession tend to be consistently unflattering, and that their inadequate salaries are all too accurate a reflection of the public's attitude. He also noted the following:

> There is the atmosphere of meaness and distrust in which teachers work; they punch time clocks like factory workers or clerks and are rarely if ever consulted about things that concern them most, such as the content of the curriculum or the selection of textbooks. And there are the conditions of work themselves: teaching loads that provide no time for reflection or for privacy, and menial tasks such as 'patrol duty' in the halls or cafeteria that demean or deny professional status (p. 143).

For the most part, then, it was not teachers who were the objects of Silberman's criticism but rather the entrenched and mindless policies of schools and schoolboards. Teachers were seen by Silberman as pawns in a scheme much larger than themselves. Silberman even expressed his appreciation to a colleague who rescued him "from the arrogance and intellectual and social snobbery toward teachers that has become almost a hallmark of contemporary critics of education" (p. x). Silberman was explicitly critical of many of these critics:

> To read some of the more important influential contemporary critics of education--men like Edgar Friedenberg, Paul Goodman, John Holt, Jonathan Kozol--one might think that the schools are staffed by sadists and clods who are drawn into teaching by the lure of upward mobility and the opportunity to take out their anger--Friedenberg prefers the sociological term ressentiment, or a kind of free floating ill-temper--on the students. This impression is conveyed less by explicit statements than by nuance and tone--a kind of "aristocratic insouciance" as David Riesman calls it, which these writers affect, in turn reflecting the general snobbery of the educated upper middle

> class toward the white-collar lower-middle-class world of teachers, social workers, civil servants, and policemen. . .They seem unable to show empathy for the problems of the lower-middle-class teacher whose passivity and fear of violence they deride as effeminate and whose humanity they seem, at times, almost to deny (p. 141-142).

Perhaps most distinctively, Silberman was able to view the process of education within a greater social context, understanding and acknowledging other influences, apart from schools and teachers, on children's school performance. "It would be unreasonable, perhaps, to expect absolutely equal results from different schools. Lower class youngsters start school with severe educational deficiencies for which the school cannot be blamed; moreover, the school as we have already argued, is only one of a number of educating institutions and influences that affect a youngster's academic achievement" (p. 62). Thus, teachers were not singled out by Silberman, as they were by the other authors discussed here, as the sole impediment to educational success. He alone seemed cognizant of the results of the Coleman report (U.S. Office of Education, 1966) and the federal study on racial isolation in the public schools (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1967), both of which clearly point to the effect of "the interaction of family, neighborhood, and school on the academic and afective growth of children" (Passow, 1971).

On the other hand, Silberman could not quite extricate himself from the spirit of the times in which he wrote, which is to say that he too occasionally fell into the teacher-bashing mode which was so fashionable in the late 60s and early 70s. When he posed the question "What is it in the schools that leads to failure?" (p. 83), his answer was "low teacher

expectations." (No mention was made of low expectations of underclass student performance expressed by parents, peers, or the media). Although teachers were not portrayed as purposely venal and racist, they were seen as doing little to interest their students in learning, even to the point of actively discouraging achievement in their lower-class students. As examples of the ways in which teachers typically patronize and disparage their students, Silberman invoked the observations of Herndon and Kohl. He felt, as did Holt, that schools destroyed "students curiosity to think or act for themselves" (p. 134). Silberman did eventually describe several schools in which teachers treated their low-income students respectfully, but his message was clear: teachers who respected their students, who created joyous, happy classrooms were indeed rare:

> Because adults take the schools so much for granted, they fail too appreciate what grim, joyless places most American school are, how oppressive and petty are the rules by which they are governed, how intellectually sterile and esthetically barren the atmosphere, what an appalling lack of civility obtains on the parts of teachers and principals, what contempt they unconsciously display for children as children (p. 10).

Thus, despite his intention to avoid the usual belittlement of teachers, Silberman at times created a caricature of teachers that was not all that dissimilar from those whom he professed to differ with.

At this point the obvious question is, to what extent did the message and tone of these books affect teacher stress and burnout in the late 60s and early 70s? My sense is that these books did, indeed, increase the stress on teachers during these troubled times. Being the object of derision and contempt in a series of popular books was hardly what

teachers of this era needed, given the enormity and assumed immediacy of the task with which they were challenged, the political brouhahas within which many teacher organizations were entangled, and the chaotic state of many classrooms. Critics, of course, might argue that teachers were being attacked for just these reasons--that is, that they (the teachers) were not doing the educational work that so urgently needed to be done, were too busy protecting their political and power bases, and were not functioning effectively in the classroom. But it must be acknowledged that the message we, as a society, were giving teachers was rather an odd one, something on the order of: "We need you desperately to right the past wrongs of education, we want you to accomplish this difficult task almost immediately--and by the way, we think most, if not all of you, are essentially incompetent and morally unfit for this undertaking." Actually, the message was at times even more vexing than that, because many of the critics of education during this time were unsure whether to label the task "difficult" or not--the potential charge of racism confounding the definition of the task. The bottom line, though, is that the wholesale derogation of the profession made it more difficult for teachers to enlist the cooperation and trust of parents and schoolboards, not to mention students themselves, many of whom could not have helped but pick up on the prevailing cynical attitude toward teachers' competence and authority. Without question, working effectively and confidently in such circumstances becomes increasingly difficult.

Grant (1983) ascribed the decline in teachers' status in this country to the general erosion of the social bases of authority that occurred in the 60s. He felt that the loss of teachers' esteem could not be "wholly or even largely blamed on the romantic writers or neo-Marxist critics of the

recent past" (p. 601), although he did suggest "that a great libel was committed" (p. 601). While agreeing with Grant that books such as Holt's, Kohl's, Kozol's, Herndon's, or Silberman's did not, by themselves, cause the decline in public respect for teachers, the view here is that the "great libel committed" did not fall onto deaf ears. The books noted here were not esoteric, high-brow literature; they were popular, "high-profile" works. If these books did not create the tone for teacher disrespect they certainly exacerbated an already-established tendency. They contributed to a cultural milieu in which it became increasingly difficult for teachers to feel good about what they were doing or to feel they were contributing to the social welfare of this country.

These books did not, by themselves, cause any teacher to give up or burn out. It is doubtful that any teacher resigned as a direct result of reading any of them. These books did, however, constitute yet another source of stress for teachers, another unwelcome burden. The indictments in these books suggested that teachers' efforts were useless or even harmful. Burnout is a phenomenon defined in large part by feelings of uselessness and inconsequentiality-- and books like those discussed here contributed in some small but meaningful way to this feeling.

References

Grant, G. "The Teacher's Predicament." Teachers College Record, 1983, 84, 3, 593-609.

Herndon, J. The Way it Spozed to Be. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965.

Holt, J. How Children Fail. New York: Dell, 1964.

Holt, J. How Children Learn. New York: Dell, 1967

Holt, J. The Underachieving School, New York: Delta, 1969.

Hook, S. Reason, Social Myths and Democracy. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966.

Kohl, H. 36 Children. New York: Signet, 1967.

Kozol, J. Death At An Early Age. New York: New York: Bantam Books, 1967.

Kozol, J. The Night is Dark and I am Far From Home, NY: Continuum, 1975.

Passow, H. Urban Education in the 1970's. New York: Teachers College Press, 1971.

Postman, N. Teaching as a Conserving Activity. New York: Dell, 1979.

Rosenthal, R. and Jacobson, L. Pygmalion in the Classroom. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968.

Sarason, S. B. The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change. 2nd Edition. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1982.

Silberman, C. Crisis in the Classroom: the Remaking of American Education. New York: Random House, 1970.

U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. Racial Isolation in the Public Schools. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967.

U.S. Office of Education. Equality of Educational Opportunity. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966.